

COLAISTE NAISUINTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHÁ  
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
B. A. DEGREE IN ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

STUDENT : JENNIFER O' FARRELL

TITLE : THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF ART AS A SUPPORT  
STUDY AT SENIOR CYCLE LEVEL

DESCRIPTION : My dissertation is about the use of art history as a support study in the Leaving Certificate Art, Craft and Design course. I look at the position of art history in the curriculum and through a scheme which I carried out with a fifth year group explore its use as a resource and support for pupils. The aim of the scheme was to create a piece of calligraphy in the form of a scroll or fold-out book using the Book of Kells as the support study and the theme of the Environment. The results of the scheme which I assessed in terms of the pupils support study books and the finished pieces were positive. The level of commitment which I received from the class was proof that they were motivated and enthusiastic about the project.

The literature which I read to support my work is largely based on the aesthetic qualities of art history and the advantages of starting to develop the pupils awareness and appreciation of the subject as early as possible. I discuss the importance of having an understanding of the basic techniques and ideas behind a work of art. During the scheme of work which I carried out with the fifth year group I discovered how an understanding of an artist/artefact can instil confidence in pupils who previously were slightly intimidated by the subject.



NC 0021640 2







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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF ART AS A SUPPORT STUDY AT  
SENIOR CYCLE LEVEL

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education

in

Candidacy for the

B.A. DEGREE IN ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION

JENNIFER O' FARRELL

07 / 04 / 1997



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Professor McCarthy and the year tutors, Eileen Doyle and Maria Farrell for all their help and support during the course of writing this dissertation.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their ~~patience~~ and support throughout the year.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Art past and present is part of our heritage and future generations' heritage. We are surrounded by art in our lives, architecture, television graphics, fashion design, manufactured art and environmental design, all of which influence the way we see the world and appreciate our heritage.

It is important to realise that greater visual awareness by the public can be instrumental in improving the total environment. [1]

If pupils are given the chance to understand and to experience works of art, they will develop an appreciation of their environment. This supports what

Fichner Rathus said about understanding the past in order to appreciate the present.

The program should offer the young adolescent opportunities to discover himself and his world and to relate these insights to his daily life. [2]

This in turn argues for the use of support studies in secondary school especially in the traditional Leaving Certificate where the history of art course is broad:

pupils have so much to cover, they could benefit from concentrating on one particular period of art or on one artist as a support study for a project while still continuing with study of the history course.

Students gain more from a serious study of a few major areas of art than from a superficial survey - type approach to art history. The study



of art objects should include the making of aesthetic value judgements and the experiencing of art in a meaningful and vital way.

The art curriculum must recognise the value of art history, not just for project work but for pupils who wish to pursue art at third level, and ofcourse for personal fulfillment. There are several ways in which art history can be taught in secondary school. It does not have to be approached in chronological order. Starting with prehistoric or medieval art and working up to present day, one would never finish the course within the two years allotted and certainly the pupil would never have the time to appreciate any aspect of the period of work apart from a surface knowledge. The art teacher needs to be selective in order to give pupils the best possible experience of art history.

Art history can permeate an entire art program, instead of being taught as seperate units. [4]

Art history has a huge amount to offer as a support study in practical work. The scheme that I am carrying through with the fifth year group has a strong basis in the history of the Book of Kells. I seek to emphasise the importance of using historical references as part of the support studies in practical work.

Another way of integrating the history of art is to study the styles, methods and the media of the particular artist or of the artefact.



The teacher could involve the pupils in discussion about the artists methods of creation, his views on the subject he is portraying in his composition and his choice of particular art elements and the ways in which they were used. This is a way of developing pupils visual awareness and building up their vocabulary and their critical responses.

Art criticism, the forming of value judgements, should also be part of the art program..... Students should have experience in criticising their own work and in forming critical judgements about professional works of the past and present. [5]



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 1

1. National Art Education Association “ Art History in the Middle School and the Junior High School ” in Art Education Middle /Junior High School. (Virginia, 1916 Association Drive) pg. 109.
2. Ibid, pg. 111
3. Ibid, pg. 111
4. Ibid, pg. 112
5. Ibid, pg. 113



## CHAPTER 2

### THE ARTS IN EDUCATION

The arts are of central importance in education at all levels.[1]

The opening line of the foreword of 'The Art in Education' written by the Curriculum Examination Board in relation to the position of the Arts in Irish education.

Young people should be helped to develop an appreciation of their artistic heritage. [2]

The pupils can learn and develop if s/he is given the opportunity to study the arts, this development cannot be found in television soaps or comic books and must stir the pupils interest if they are to learn.

Giving additional time on the school timetable to art, music, dance and drama in the curriculum is not enough. The arts need to be properly integrated into the curriculum with adequate allocation of funds and facilities if they are to complete their role in Irish education.

One aspect of the arts which should make it attractive to pupils is its lack of discrimination in relation to "gender, class or level of academic achievement".

For the Arts to be taken seriously and to guarantee its success in the curriculum there is a need for financial support. However, money alone is not enough, other measures may be necessary.



Failure to effect changes recommended in previous reports on the arts cannot be blamed entirely on financial constraints. [3]

The Arts industry in Ireland is small but provides a steady number of jobs for Irish people.

Several hundred are employed in advertising, graphic design, public relations, the media - particularly the broadcast media - and as art teachers at all levels. [4]

Ireland could not do without the presence of the arts and its advantages to the countries culture and the employment which the arts industry brings.

One thing that makes Ireland so attractive to foreign visitors is a wealth of culture and if it is to be sustained, careful attention must be given to arts education.

Arts education has several aims, the first being to enable the pupil "to develop an interest in and a value for the arts" [6] in the way that is suitable to the pupils abilities and aspirations. The overall effect of this development should be the development of a love of art on the part of the pupil. This is where the teacher becomes an important part of the Art education. The teacher should have an understanding of the pupils interests and influences so that s/he can make connections between the Arts and the pupils.

The second aim is to achieve a balance between the aesthetic and artistic education, a lack of one would be inappropriate to the full rounded education promised to pupils at second level education.



The third aim is “to acquaint students with the traditions of art”. Looking at art in terms of “historical and critical perspective”. To be aware of today’s environment surrounding and culture is important if pupils are to appreciate historical traditions and develop critical skills.

A good art education depends upon

- an authentic rationale from curriculum planners.
- the developed judgement of skilled teachers
- the personal commitment of students grounded in challenging experiences of art. [7]

The planning of the curriculum is of great importance, however, if the teacher lacks the enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject, how can the pupils be expected to experience understanding and love of the arts. A well informed teacher is vital and also ‘personal commitment’ from students, in order to benefit completely from the Art.

The visual arts, which are carried out through Art, Craft and Design, is a practical subject which educates the pupil in ways of seeing and thinking in a visual way.

This learning process involves both the artistic and aesthetic experience. [10]

The Art, Craft and Design course is not a passive exchange of information from teacher to pupil but it involves the active participation of the pupil and the art elements are the vehicle through which pupils grow and develop an understanding



of the Visual Arts.

The visual arts course should seek to achieve certain things where the pupil is concerned. The pupil should be encouraged to carry out research on the theme given. They should be able to explore and express themselves with a variety of media with confidence. During the course of the project, to be aware of its progress, the ability to modify and evaluate, at the end, to complete fully the work and present it in a suitable way, all the time, evaluating the work and taking on board the work of other artists which may relate in a support studies context to the project on the theme. The aesthetic in art cannot be removed from the artistic because to make art, the artist must have a love and appreciation of the visual arts in all its forms.

Art is a complex matter and may be viewed from a number of vantage points. Sometimes its function is purely decorative, sometimes religious or magical, sometimes political. Always art is a mission of the society which produced it. [11]

In order to understand a work, it must first be placed in context. For this reason Sharpe gives a lot of background information about the artists or artifacts. However, one needs a balance between information about the person or object and background information.

The aesthetic education in the visual arts is when the student receives information which s/he should be able to apply to artistic creativeness. This is where the importance of the aesthetic in education leads to greater creativity, because the pupil has an understanding of the references he or she may be using.



The History of Art paper for the Leaving Certificate examination accounts for more than one third of the art examination marks. The course covers an unrealistic time span and is concerned with memory and verbal skills at the expense of appreciation and enjoyment of art.  
[12]

There is very little time for aesthetic appreciation in the history of art course. The student can achieve a minimum grade just by memorising the facts and doing very little practical work. However, if the student is motivated, it is possible to involve the appreciation and love of the History of Art through support studies in practical work.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

1. Curriculum and Examination Board 'Foreword' in *The Arts in Education. A Curriculum and Examination Board Discussion Paper* (Dublin, 1985) pg. 3
2. Ibid, pg. 3
3. Curriculum and Examination Board 'Introduction' in *The Arts in Education. A Curriculum and Examination Board Discussion Paper* (Dublin, 1985) pg. 4
4. Ibid, 'Rationale for the Arts in Irish Education', pg. 5
5. Ibid, pg. 5
6. Ibid, pg. 7
7. Ibid, pg. 8
8. Ibid, pg. 8
9. Ibid, pg. 9
10. Ibid, 'The Visual Arts' pg. 16
11. Henry Sharpe, 'Introduction' in Art History and Appreciation (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1976) pg.1
12. Curriculum and Examination Board, 'The Visual Arts' in The Arts in Education: A Curriculum Examination board Discussion Paper, (Dublin, 1985) pg. 19



## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the opening chapter of Alan Gartenhaus' book, 'Creative Thinking', in Minds In Motion, he deals with the meaning of creativity, how we are all familiar with it but how few of us have tried to develop this creative side. During the first years of school, children are taught skills such as memorising, adding and become accustomed to being tested. There are what Gartenhaus calls the 'correct responses'. The first chapter is mainly concerned with 'convergent' and 'divergent' thinking and examines the basics of creativity.

Creativity is an ability to generate ideas and possibilities, beyond the functions of habit and opinion, which lead to personal discovery, change and a higher level of understanding. [1]

The author is concerned predominantly with using the museum and peoples individual responses to works of art. There is no better support study for a class than close examination and observation of the historical work being utilised.

Gartenhaus has made suggestions for possible approaches using the contents of the Museum and to adopt his opinions to suit the teaching of art history as a support at leaving certificate is a relevant guide for creating a successful project with a class group.

Gartenhaus believes that people develop creativity through their experience with



art. According to him, an awareness of art can develop a pupils confidence in terms of use of language and knowledge of techniques and skills when discussing a piece of work.

In an attempt to show the variety of resources which the Museum has to offer as a support study for project work, Gartenhaus suggests a series of activities which one could use in the classroom, before and after a visit to the Museum. The key objective being that pupils view Art history as a creative and very enriching part of the Art course. The wider use of Art history in the practical classroom will give pupils a much better understanding and greater scope for creative expression.

Creative thinking includes personal processes, such as new ways of looking at things, new ways of organising things and new attitudes or new ideas about ideas. [2]

Gartenhaus makes valid points about the positive aspects of art history and appreciation. The application of art history is being examined through the scheme of work, involving art history at Leaving Certificate level.

During the scheme of work, the pupils will be encouraged to keep a support studies notebook which will include notes on the relevant artists and will show a development of students skills at being critical and in their use of relevant vocabulary.

These support studies books will be used to record their notes on the historical reference and to compile their own work also, preparatory notes and sketches.

“Sketchbooks : Explore and Store” offers a thought provoking opinion on the



advantages of sketchbooks as an everyday tool for the classroom. Gillian Robinson gives her view of the educational value of sketchbooks, she explains how valuable sketch books are in terms of gathering research, work by trial and error, to develop aesthetic awareness of his or her surroundings and to help students to reach conclusions.

Its meaning lies in its content, its inner world, a world of imagination of ideas in embryo, of responses to the world around. [3]

Robinson believes that the birth of an idea begins in the pupils sketchbook, where there is no fear of making a mistake or being too precise about the work because it is just roughwork, which will later lead to the development of a piece or pieces of work which have to be researched and recorded in the sketchbook, beneficial to the pupils and as an indication of interest / quality to the teacher. Even if the finished piece is average or less, the sketchbook /support studies can indicate understanding and bring the grade up.

Art history can be approached in many different ways and Laura Chapman's series of books 'Adventures in Art' gives us many project ideas which incorporate a useful amount of Art history in the context of support ideas.

'A World of Images' program includes many examples of art from Western and non-Western cultures. [4]

She combines general information with artists biographies, comparisons with cross cultural work, contrasts and comparisons of styles and techniques. Three



main topics are given in sections. The first section is concerned with Western art, giving the key words in architecture, painting and sculpture. Chapman also provides us with a time line at the end of each chapter, which summarises the most common styles or movements for use by students.

There is a strong emphasis on cross-curricular connections between social studies and Art history and appreciation.

As most other cultures, non-western art styles are based on European art influences, the main focus of this book is Western history adopting it for the practical classroom, as an educational support and aid for pupils.

The main focus of the syllabus for Leaving Certificate Art History, is pre 1900, and needs to be explored more intensely as a support in practical work. The 20th Century can become exhausted as a support study because every pupil knows Picasso. backwards, not that this knowledge isn't valuable, it is, but medieval art can often be neglected because there is less familiarities about it for pupils. Or at least it may seem so. Through my scheme based on the Book of Kells, I am developing areas of interest for my pupils which are not so archaic as they might seem, these will be discussed later in details.

Laura Chapman focuses on medieval art in chapter five, I looked at this in detail before developing the fifth year scheme. In chapter 4, 'Seeing and Discussing Art', there are three major sections, the first offering methods for developing pupils 'aesthetic perception' or their ability to appreciate the work. The second section gives the three main steps in learning to criticise art work.



... describing, analysing and interpreting art. [5]

The third section of chapter 4 offers criteria for pupils when judging works of art. She gives us a set of leading questions from which pupils become motivated and confident in being critical of works of art and of their own work, similar to what Gartenhaus sought to achieve through his use of the museum and exposure to numerous works of art.

Chapman does not neglect the pupils need for the relevant vocabulary, she gives lists of the new terms used throughout the book and defines them in the glossary.

What students learn in the processes of creating art should be applied when they study Art history. Their skills in art criticism should be applied when they create art and study art history. [6]

The development of visual literacy and knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design including the history of art, our diverse artistic heritage and a variety of other artistic traditions, together with the ability to make practical connections between this and the pupils own work. [7]

The author of "Using art and artifacts" points out the potential that using art history has in the work of the pupils. There is a valuable experience to be gained by introducing students to art and design forms. Children will have responses to art just as adults have, often children's reactions will be honest and more immediate and should always be listened to. The author discusses the importance of the teachers role in the use of art history and artifacts in teaching art, craft and design.

...the teacher must play a vital role as mediator, as discussion partner,



as provider of information and explanations. [8]

By using art history as support, pupils gain confidence when making responses to the work, learn to be critical, discover new ways of seeing through exposure to art works and pupils may begin to use techniques in their own work that they have seen in other artists work, develop a wide vocabulary and discover that they are free to express themselves in their own work.

... knowing something of this history [of art, architecture, painting and sculpting] helps us to understand why artists worked in particular ways, or why they aimed at certain effects. [9]

Not to exclude the personal response of the pupil, rather to nurture and value it, while still recognising the importance of possessing the relevant knowledge.

... important that children should be able to see many different kinds of pictures and be allowed to respond to them in a personal and feeling way rather than to know 'facts' and be told what they should think. [10]

Learning about art and artists, using Art History as a support study, should not be a passive activity for pupils. They should be made aware that the history of art is still a tool which can and should be used to its full potential to develop the pupils awareness and abilities to create work which is spontaneous and original.

Art history is not a stagnant thing, it has life and potential to aid pupils in the creation of work.

In the scheme the main support study is The Book of Kells and pupils are encouraged to interpret the illumination and style and essentially to develop their



understanding of this ancient art as being a huge influence on modern calligraphy and design. If pupils are aware of this, they will develop through their scrolls.

Art history as a support study should do certain things. One should ask oneself, do the objects or images “support, extend and challenge” [11] the pupils understanding and awareness of the subject. In this scheme, based on The Book of Kells, it is important to look at the thinking behind the creation of the work and life styles of the people who created it.

Pupils must never be made to feel, however, that their own work is in any way, shape or form an inferior version of that which they are viewing or handling. [12]

Pupils should be made aware of the value of their work and should learn to respect their work, not to feel that it is being compared to an adults' work. It is healthy that the pupil can identify similarities and influences between their work and the artist or artefact being studied. The pupil should be encouraged to recognise connections, however, small such as a particular brushstroke or colour which is similar to their own work.

In Lois Fichner-Rathus book, Understanding Art, she sought to write a text book for pupils which has a strong grounding in our appreciation but also incorporates the practical work, media and historical facts. The author compiled a text which was exciting and dealt with more than just art history. Rathus recognises that there are a wide variety of areas of the Arts which can enrich a pupils view of history.

It communicates the excitement, relevance and beauty of art by



combining the elements of art with art history. [13]

Fichner-Rathus believes that in order for the pupil to fully appreciate art, he or she should be well versed on the history of the particular era or age, or at least be aware of the movements characteristics.

To demonstrate that artists from all periods and all cultures have used the same elements of art in order to commemorate their experiences, express religious values, protest the social order, decorate their communities, or persuade their audiences. [14]

The aim of Fichner-Rathus, text, is to educate the reader about the practicalities of using history of art. Rathus is concerned with how the pupil approaches art history from the start, how his or her appreciation of this subject builds and grows. Fichner-Rathus sees the need to nurture this growth and has this awareness when writing.

The arts must..... contribute forcefully to the education of the public.  
(Jacques-Louis David) [15]

This refers to the advantages of the arts in general to a person, especially art and design, which artists have fought to have it recognised and applied more effectively in our lives.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3

1. Alan Gartenhaus, 'Creative Thinking', in Minds in Motion: Using Museums to Expand Creative Thinking, 2nd ed. (California, Caddo Gap Press, 1993) pg. 14.
2. Ibid, pg. 15
3. Gillian Robinson, Sketchbooks : Explore and Store,( Britain: Hodder and Stoughton Educational, 1995) pg.13
4. Laura H. Chapman, A World of Images (Teachers Edition) Massachusettes: Davis Publications Inc, 1992) pg.4
5. Ibid, pg. 73
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7. Kate Stephens, 'Preface' in Learning Through Art and Artefacts - Art and Design for Learning (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1996)pg. 9
8. Ibid, pg. 16
9. Ibid, pg. 18
10. Ibid, pg. 19
11. Ibid, pg. 9
12. Ibid, pg.26



13. Lois Fichner-Rathus, 'Preface : Coverage' in Understanding Art (New Jersey : Prentice Hall, 1986) pg. 14

14. Ibid, pg. 15

15. Ibid, pg. 23

1. The (1984) Report of the Commission on the  
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14 1984-1985

15 1984-1985

## CHAPTER 4

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHEME OF WORK

The scheme of work which I carried out with my fifth year class was based on The Book of Kells as the source and support study. The theme of the scheme is 'The Environment' - Our Surroundings / Nature 'Earth, Wind, Fire, Water'. It is a seven week scheme and at the end the pupils should show a good understanding of the Art of Calligraphy and awareness of The Book of Kells as a support study. The aim of the scheme is to create a piece of calligraphy in the form of a scroll or fold out book, using The Book of Kells, with the theme of the environment.

In the first lesson of the scheme, the objectives were 'to introduce pupils to calligraphy, through basic markmaking techniques, using balsa wood and ink, and to develop an understanding of calligraphy as the art of beautiful writing. I sought to begin to introduce pupils to The Book of Kells, to make them aware of its qualities as a valuable source for their project, through a short slide show where pupils took notes about the pages, making observations about colour and techniques themselves.

In the second lesson the objectives were to develop pupils skills at spacing, ruling up and holding the pen and to develop an understanding of Uncial script through



practising the strokes and the alphabet. We were looking at the place of the Uncial script in history, and at how it has been used and adapted down through the years. In lesson three, the objectives were to develop pupils confidence with calligraphy through practice of their chosen text or the alphabet and to begin to develop a possible format and layout of text in the form of thumb-nail sketches. At this stage, pupils know exactly what they are doing, the lessons will continue to be based strongly on the historical references and the pupils will get handouts of information each week.

In lesson four, the objectives were to develop pupil awareness of the design process by making a mockup of the scroll or fold out book and to further the pupils skills at calligraphy and awareness of The Book of Kells as the support study.

In lesson five, the objectives were to develop an awareness of the design process through designing the illuminated letter to suit the text and to develop an understanding of creating a format for the scroll or fold out book, based on the mock-up. The pupils are well into their projects now and the originality of each pupils design and ideas should be beginning to evolve now. Although the source and support study was the same for all, each scroll or book turned out completely different, this shows just how resourceful the class can be when using a historical source.

In lesson six, the objectives were to introduce the pupils to composition by putting their text and illuminated letter together successfully and to further the pupils awareness of The Book of Kells, as a source and its qualities as a support study.



In lesson seven, the objective was to continue with the finished piece. To develop the pupils understanding of colour, by relating their use of colours which relate to The Book of Kells, when applying it to the illuminated letter. This is the final lesson and at this stage the class will have each completed a scroll or book of their own design which reflects their support study and research into The Book of Kells. The pupils have been keeping a support study notebook, into which they record their notes taken about The Book of Kells slides, and the handouts that I gave them were put in. This notebook is also for keeping preliminary sketches and any ideas that the pupils may have for their project. This support study notebook, should show the pupils development throughout the scheme in terms of their ability to be critical of their work and the support study and their use of vocabulary. The pupils should feel that they can express themselves freely in their notebooks.





Fig 4.1 Pupils at work



## ABOUT THE BOOK OF KELLS

The origins of The Book of Kells are uncertain but it is thought to have originated in Ireland. The book is similar to an equally famous book called the Lindisfarne Gospels in England. These beautiful books were written by monks who spent all their days copying Bibles and other holy scripts. Every monastery needed to have their own books to study and to use for teaching other monks and clergy. Prior to the invention of the printing press in the mid 15th Century, the monks themselves did all the work by hand. The script used was a mixture of old Latin and the 'Vulgate', from the 6th Century. The Book of Kells consists mainly of the four Gospels, with some preliminary chapters. Many scholars have studied it and believe that it is the work of three monks judging by the slight variation in style. An illuminated manuscript is a piece of script on text which is decorated with silver or gold. The manuscripts were written on vellum (calf / sheep skin) and the inks were made from natural materials such as soot or iron sulphate which the artist mixed with gum and water. The colours were made of animal, vegetable and mineral extracts.

In lesson six and seven, of the scheme, pupils have the opportunity to use gold poster paint in areas of the scroll or book. To achieve the effect of vellum, we stained cartridge paper with tea and coffee. This was very effective and some pupils may want to char the edges of the piece as well.



The pages of The Book of Kells are richly decorated with strange creatures, such as animals resembling lions or birds but with human heads, some of these symbolise the 'Four Evangelists, Mathew, Mark, Luke and John'. They are full of patterns and woven designs in the recognisable Celtic style. These decorations are so intricately painted that they can confuse pupils, this is why, when giving information on the illuminated letters, I gave out photocopies of simplified letters from a book which deals solely with these letters.

The choice of a theme was not difficult, The Book of Kells conveys to me the idea of 'The Environment'. This is possibly because of the colours used, the array of animal images and the organic feel that the pages have. The issue of the Environment is very much at the forefront of peoples minds today, so pupils should be able to relate. I left the pupils free to interpret the theme themselves. Some pupils took the aspects of Nature, concentrating on the four elements while the other pupils chose topics which were part of their lives such as television, drugs and music. They were very responsive to the theme while still keeping with the historical reference of The Book of Kells.





Fig 4.2 Extract from the Book Of Kells



Fig 4.3 Extract from the Book of Kells



## PROFILE OF THE SCHOOL

The school follows in the tradition of the Mercy Order, founded and owned by the 'Sisters of Mercy', whose founder Catherine McAuley inspired their strong beliefs in the Gospel.

There are 525 pupils in this all girls northside school which opened in 1957. The aim of the school is to encourage all pupils to attain high educational standards, to ensure that each and every student matures towards confidence, compassion and creativity, enabling them to take on the challenge of the modern world.

The curriculum followed in the first three years is that the Department of Education Junior Certificate. After the three years at Junior Certificate, pupils may proceed to a Transition Year Programme allowing pupils to acquire certain vocational skills and to engage in some work experience, and, or, progressing into a two year Leaving Certificate programme is line with the Department of Education Curriculum.

In relation to the position of Art, Craft and Design in the school, all first year pupils have the choice of art, craft and design where they experience a wide variety of media and techniques. They are then given the choice of continuing with art to Junior Certificate level or to choose another subject.

The art department survives on a small budget, with additional contributions by pupils each year. It has a good selection of equipment ranging from photography

to ceramics. The art room offers a large kiln and a small one for single objects, it has two pottery wheels also and an enlarger and chemicals for photography.

The school staff is approximately forty five to fifty teachers, consisting predominantly of females, a balance of young and more experienced teachers.





## CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS AND ANALYSIS ON HOW THE SCHEME OF WORK IS  
PROGRESSING

Lesson one went very well and the pupils were interested in the slides which I showed them about the Book Of Kells. The class are doing the Irish section in their art history course at the moment so the period was fresh in their minds. They became involved quickly in note taking , they discussed the patterns, remarking that they were confusing but beautiful. Most of the class were interested in how the colours that the monks used were actually made, we discussed how natural dyes can be made using onion skins, saffron and even earth. We talked about how we would achieve the same effects in our projects and could we use poster paints instead of inks, or even try to make our own natural dyes with found materials. The mark-making lesson was valuable because it loosened pupils arms and made them more confident with the balsa wood, they were not constricted in any way and they were able to practice the pen angle needed for the calligraphy pen. I found the class were excited about having the chance to explore and use the Book Of Kells as the source and the support for their project. Some pupils had never seen the book or had a chance to study a page in detail and the slides really benefited them. The class need to evaluate more thoroughly because they are a little bit shy about discussing work especially their own.

I was pleased with how today's class went and I think the project will be enjoyed by the class.





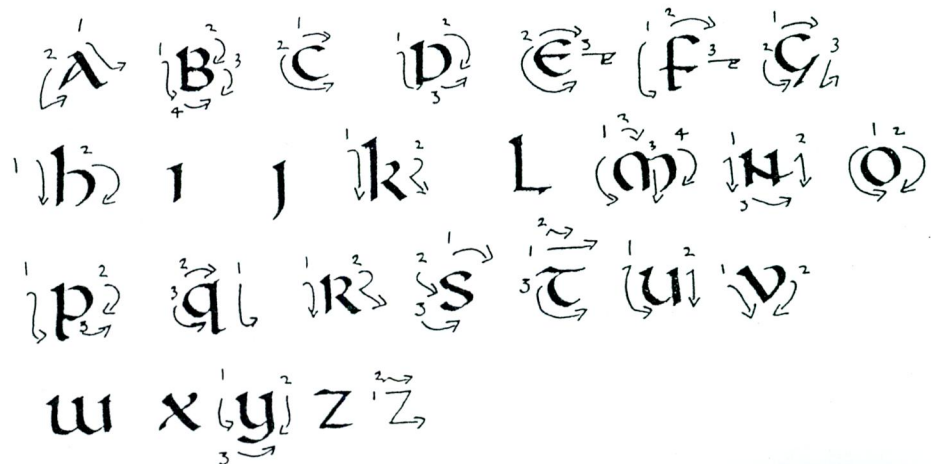
Fig. 5.1 Lesson 1 : Markmaking



AN UNCIAL HAND *pen angle 20°*

*There are many variations of this hand*

*The serif formation*  $\cdot \swarrow \uparrow = 1$



### *Uncial*

a b c d e f g h i j k  
l m n o p q r s t u v  
w x y z

### *Uncial strokes*



Fig. 5.2 Lesson 2 : Uncial Script



In lesson two, we began working with the Uncial script which is the 'hand' that the pupils will be using during the scheme to make their scrolls or fold-out books.

I gave the class some information on calligraphy, such as the papers which can be used and the different types of inks available. Today we concentrated on practicing the script and I encouraged pupils to try to achieve a flow in their lettering, to create a rhythm throughout the work. I stressed the importance of practice during this scheme so the class are being trusted with their pens at home so that they can practice during the week. The class spent ten minutes evaluating how they thought their work had progressed so far and overall they were pleased with how well the practice sheets looked after only two days. This self-evaluation by the pupils took a lot of encouragement on my part because they were reluctant to talk openly about their work. I suggested that they write in to their notebooks their opinions on their work so that they could look back over it next week and decide if they feel differently or not. Part of their development in using an historical support study is that they should develop the ability to be critical of the support and subsequently of their own work in a constructive way. The class are very motivated and they show interest in the project and they are also beginning to appreciate the Book Of Kells more fully as the project progresses.

Lesson three shows the class developing a more individual response to the Book Of Kells and they chose a particular aspect of the theme which they



# Uncial Script

Uncial is an old style of lettering used by scribes in the 5th – 8th centuries. It is based on Roman Capitals but has a distinctive curving shape. This is a good style to use to give your work a Historical (old) feel. There are no separate capital letters and some have variations.

Hold the pen at an angle of about 15–20 degrees. For your guide lines, the X height should be about 4 nib-widths plus an extra two nib-widths each for the top, ascender and the bottom, descender lines.

Before the invention of printing, all books were HANDWRITTEN and very precious objects. They were highly decorated, sometimes with expensive gold leaf and richly worked covers.

You may still see examples of this wonderful illuminated lettering in antique shops today.

Often the first letter of each page or chapter

was larger

and decorated with patterns and perhaps small pictures behind and around the letter.



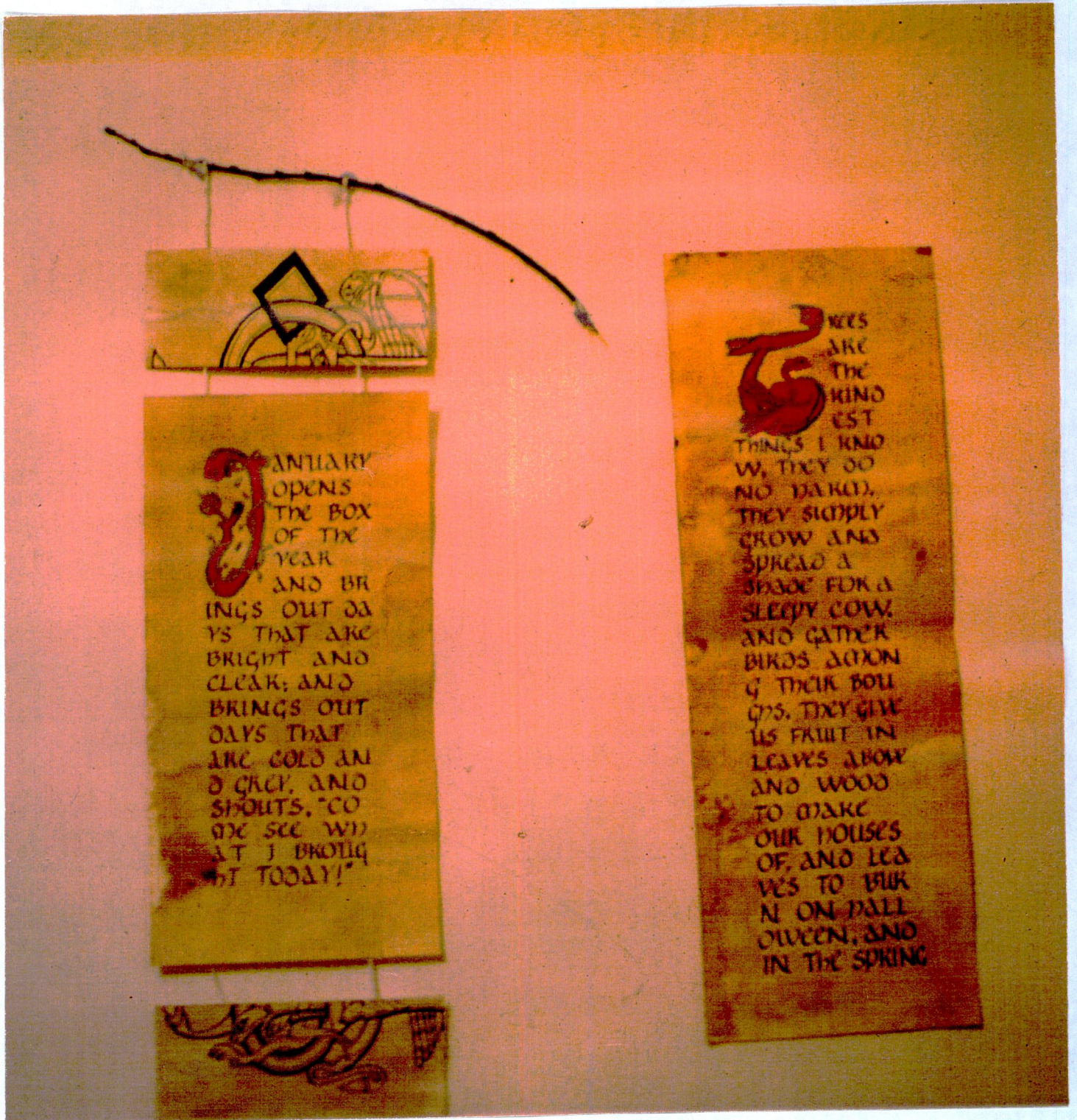


Fig. 5.4 Visual Aids



want to focus on. The 'environment' them is open to interpretation and some pupils have chosen to focus on an aspect of today's world which is very much a part of their lives. For example, one pupil has chosen a poem called 'Miss heroin', which she feels is very much part of her 'environment'. Other pupils have decided on the 'nature' aspects of the environment, such as the elements which I mentioned on the first day or some part of the natural world. The support studies notebooks are coming along quite well and the class seem to have a certain amount of pride in their notebooks which is great to see, it shows that they are really focused on what they are doing. the class are also improving at their critical evaluations, and their ability to hold the pen at the correct angle is improving in 'leaps and bounds'.

The beginning of lesson four was a little bit disjointed but I managed to bring the class down form their excitement at getting a mid-term break. The class made their 'mock-ups' today which are the roughs of what their scrolls/books will look like. This gives the pupils a chance to access how successful the design will be and to iron out any problems they may have. The pupils need this time to work out the shape of the scroll/book, how the text will fit into the final format and where they will put the illuminated letter in relation to the text. During the class I asked questions about how they thought the Book Of Kells was influencing their work or if it influenced them at all. The majority of the class were certain that they had been influenced in terms of layout of text and the colours used but they didn't think that the book influenced their decisions on the actual scroll/fold-out book. This is the response which I wanted to hear, I can see that the



support study has done its job, encouraged creativity and the flow of ideas without dictating the design solutions to the pupils. Figure 5.5 shows an example of a pupils work. This pupil has a strong ability for calligraphy. She designed the illuminated letter herself and she has pasted in the information which I gave the class on materials and papers. This is the opening page of her support studies/sketch book. Figure 5.6 shows another page of this pupils book where she is working out her ideas for the shape of the letter and the images she will use to decorate the letter.

In lesson five, the pupils took time to select the best type of paper for their piece. The type of paper used is very important if the pupils wants the script to be effective. Some pupils want the aged effect so they are using the stained paper while others want a more crisp, graphic look so they are using the cream or blue paper. The mock-up books/scrolls were very effective and I am certain that all the pupils have a good understanding of what they are doing.



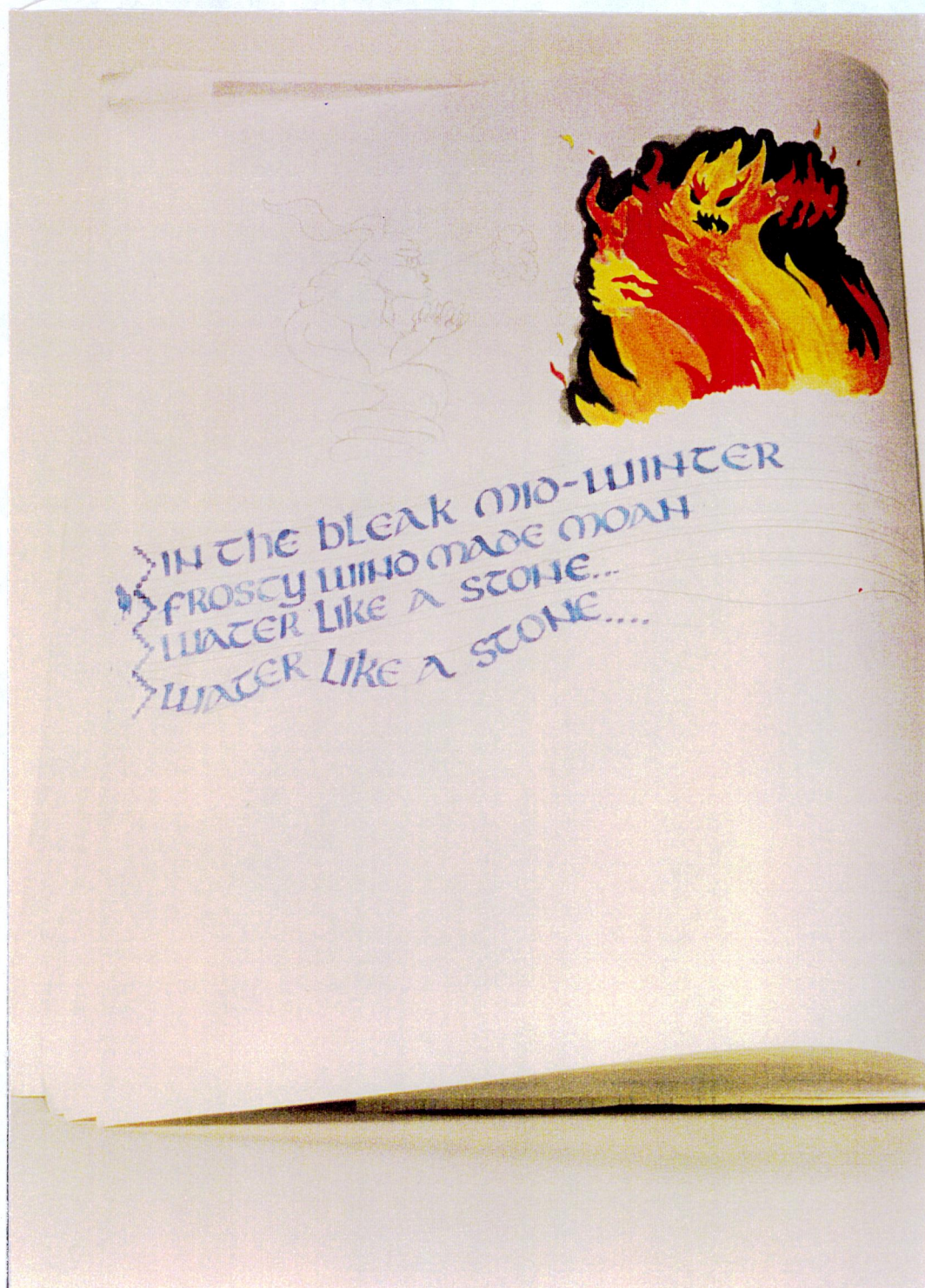


Fig. 5.5 Pupils Support Study / Sketchbook



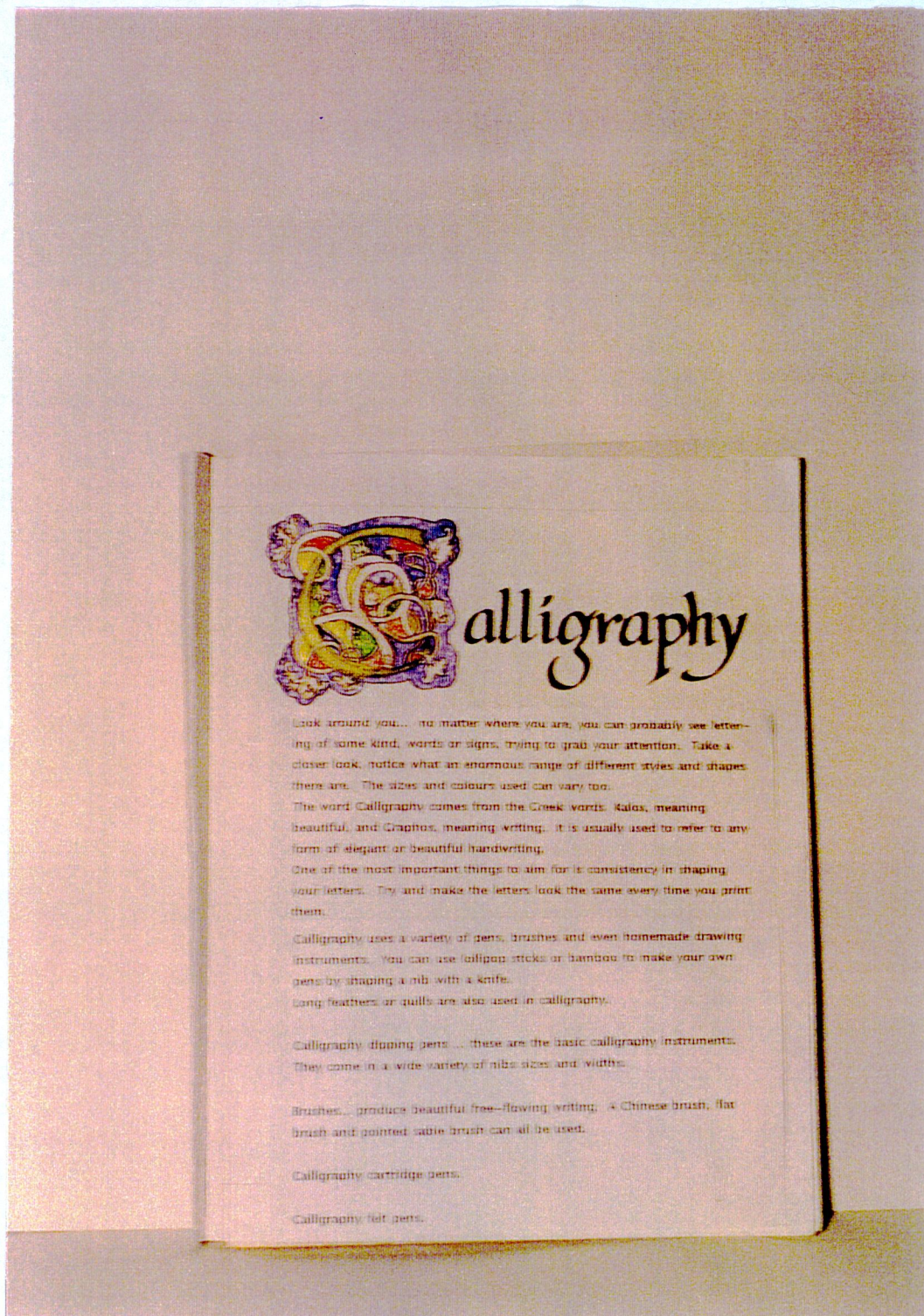


Fig. 5.6 Pupils Sketchbook



AS FAR AS YOU TAKE  
ME, THAT'S  
WHERE I BELIEVE.  
THE REALMS OF  
SOFT DELUSIONS  
ARE FLOATING ON  
THE LEAVES.

ON A DISTANT SHORELINE,  
SHE WAVES HER ARMS TO  
ME, AS ALL THE THOUGHT  
POLICE ARE CLOSING IN FOR  
SLEEP.

Fig. 5.7 Pupils Work

S FAR  
AS YOU  
TAKE ME THAT'S  
WHERE I BELIEVE.  
THE REALM  
OF SOFT DELUSIONS  
ARE FLOATING  
ON THE LEAVES.

ON A DISTANT  
SHORELINE  
SHE WAVES HER  
ARMS TO ME, AS  
ALL THE THOUGHT  
POLICE ARE CLOSING  
IN FOR SLEEP.

Fig. 5.8 Pupils work



In lesson six, the pupils were asked to consider the use of callograms in the text.

A callogram is when a line of text or a word is used to create a design or image.

I introduced the class to modern calligraphy today also in order to give them more scope for creative thought when they were deciding on the use of callograms. We discussed how contemporary calligraphers can be very creative with words and the way they arrange the words on the page. I showed the class work by Irene Wellington, who used callograms a lot in her work and we talked about how we could integrate the Book of Kells style in to a piece of modern calligraphy by the choice of colours we use and the type of paper. The class really liked Irene Wellington's work and were very eager to get started on their ideas. This stage was a good time to introduce the more creative elements of calligraphy because up until now the class were learning to feel comfortable with the pen and the style of writing and now that they are confident they can begin to experiment more. One pupil came up with a lovely idea during the class, she drew berries on the page before she began lettering and then wrote over it, changing the ink to red when she came to the berry. The results were very impressive. See figure 5.10



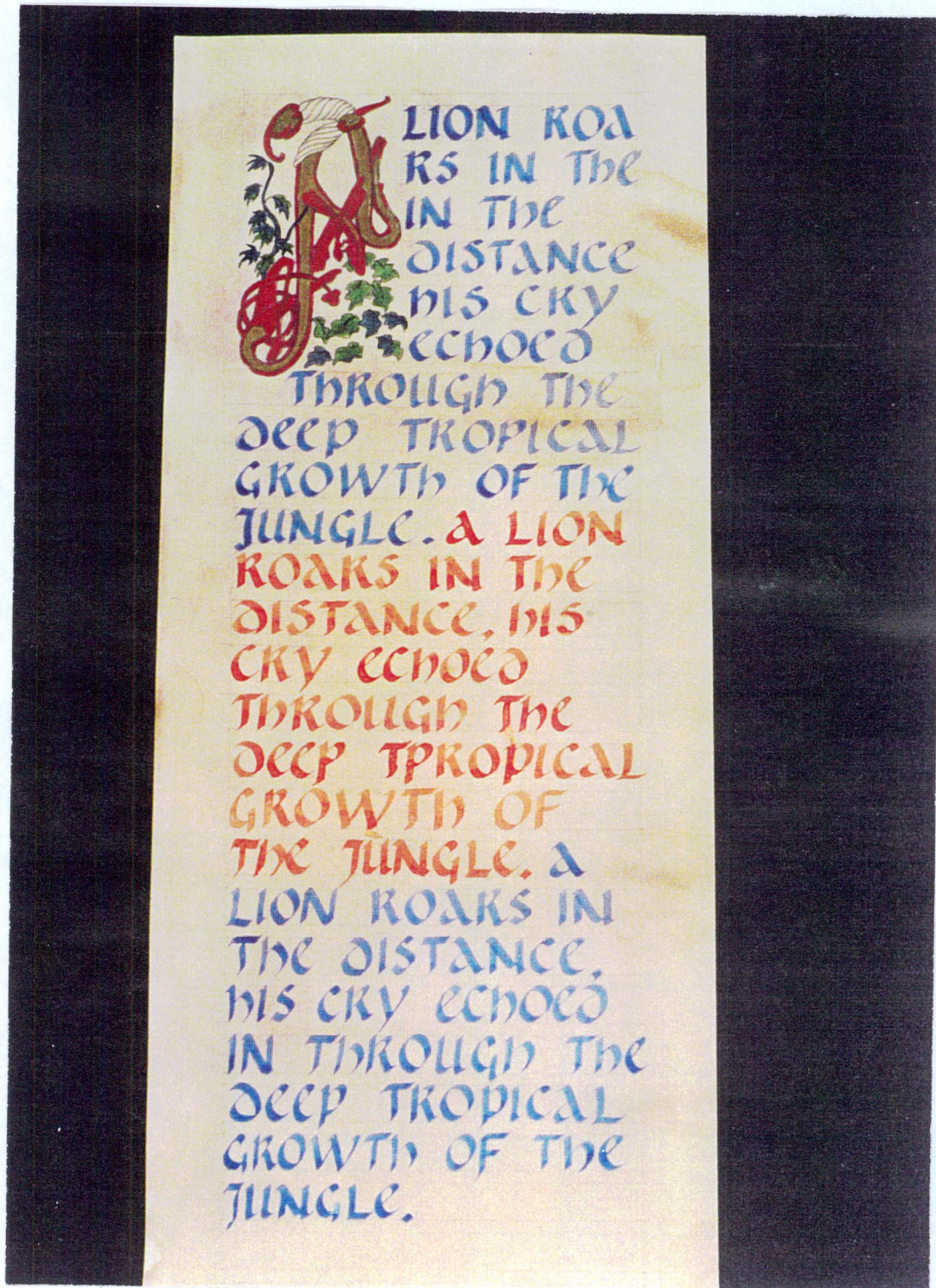


Fig. 5.9 Visual Aid used in Lesson Six



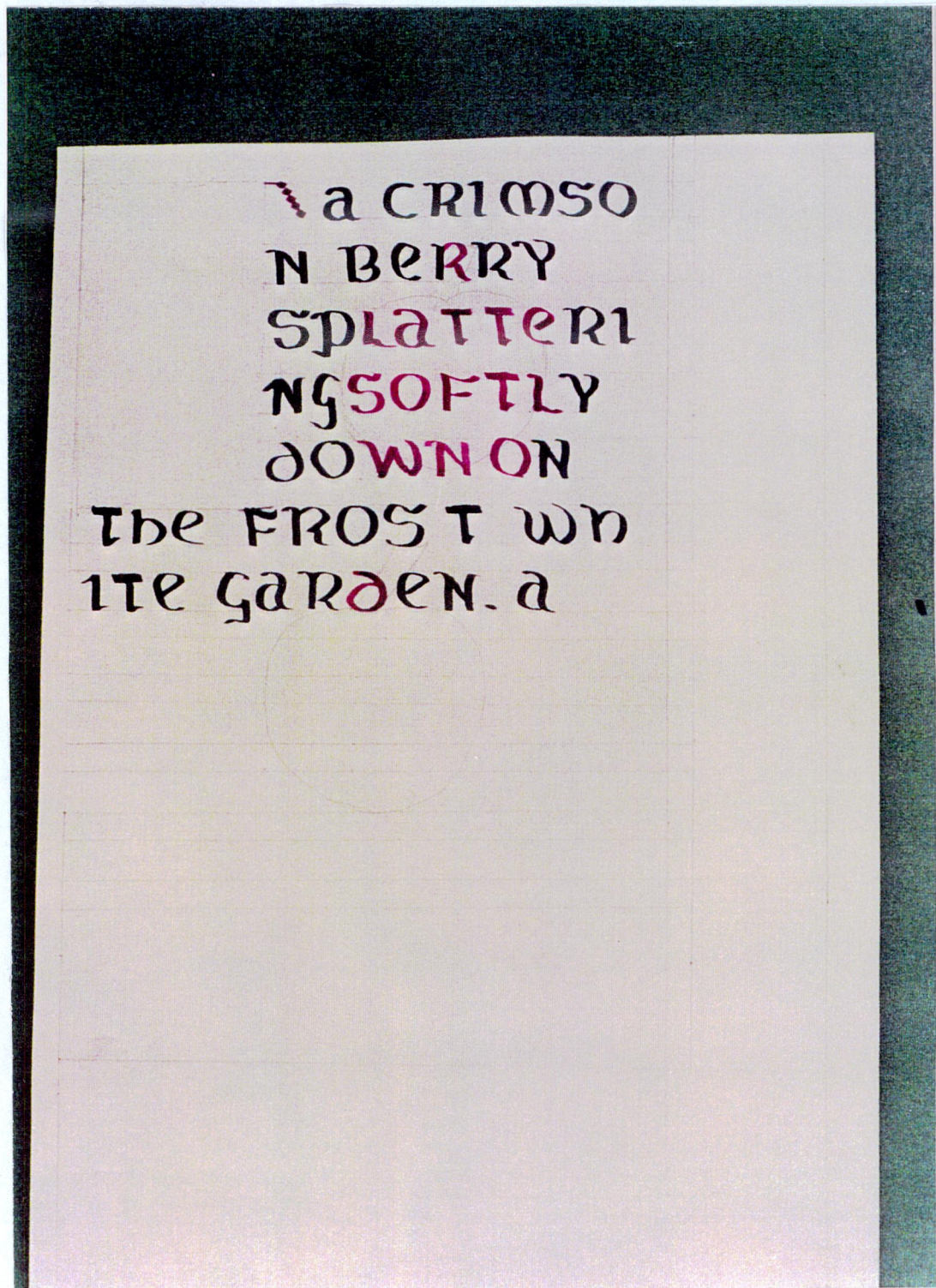


Fig. 5.10 Lesson Six : Pupils work showing the use of the callogram





Fig. 5.11 The Book Of Kells, used as an on-going support study throughout the scheme.



In lesson seven, all pupils had started on their final scrolls/books and are progressing very well. The lesson that I gave about callograms seems to have influenced the class a lot in their final designs. I also showed them work by Herman Zapf which they liked immensely. We spent a little time at the beginning of each class just discussing the work of other calligraphers and how it is similar to the Book of Kells. I always try to refer back to the historical support study when showing modern or contemporary work so that the class can have the chance to make similarities between the 'ancient' and the modern. As the scheme comes to an end, I can see the work really progressing and I think the finished pieces will be very successful.

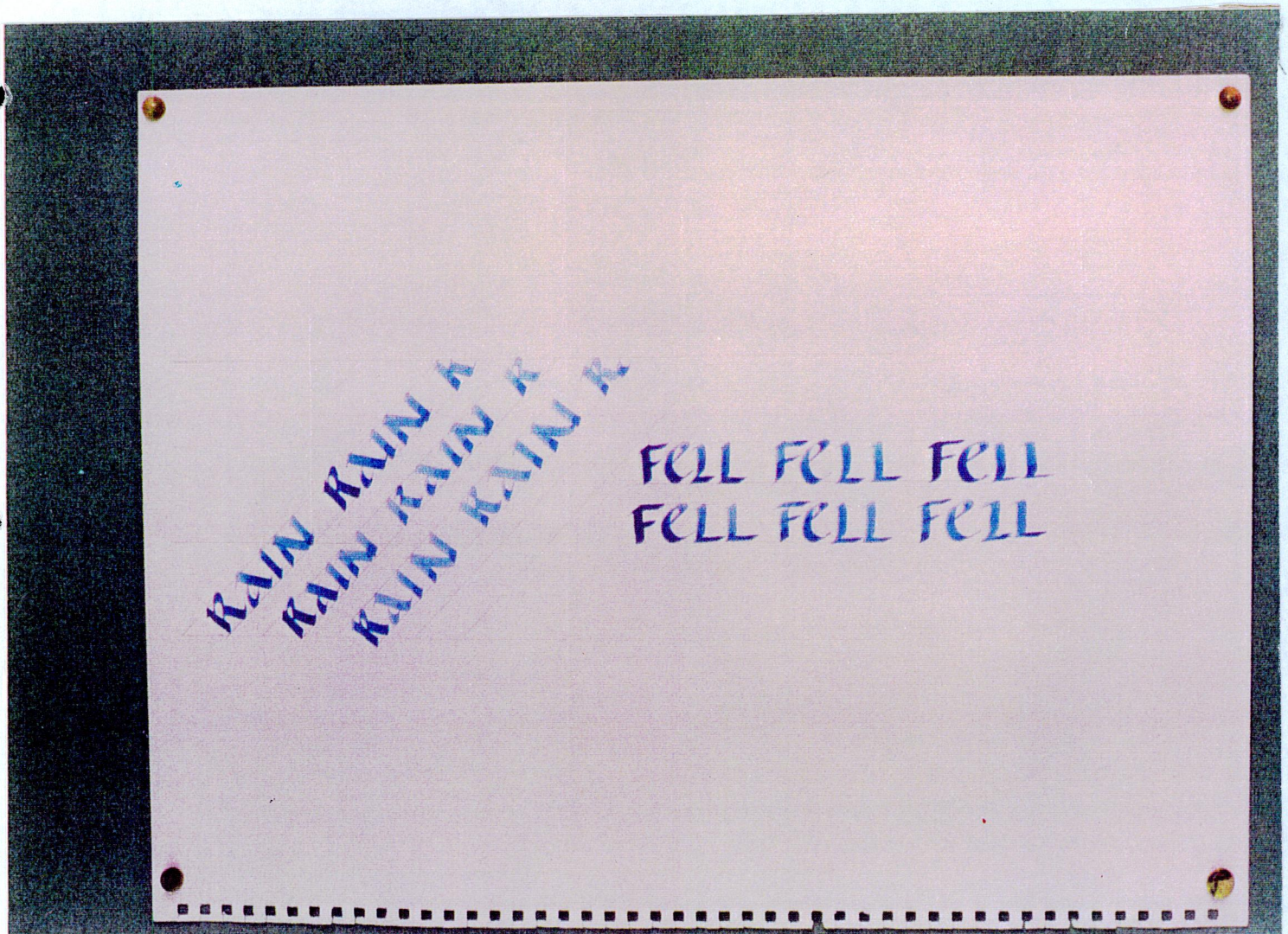


Fig. 5.12 A Visual Aid to explain Callograms





Fig. 5.13 Support Study: A calligraphy book rendered in a modern way using an ancient text.

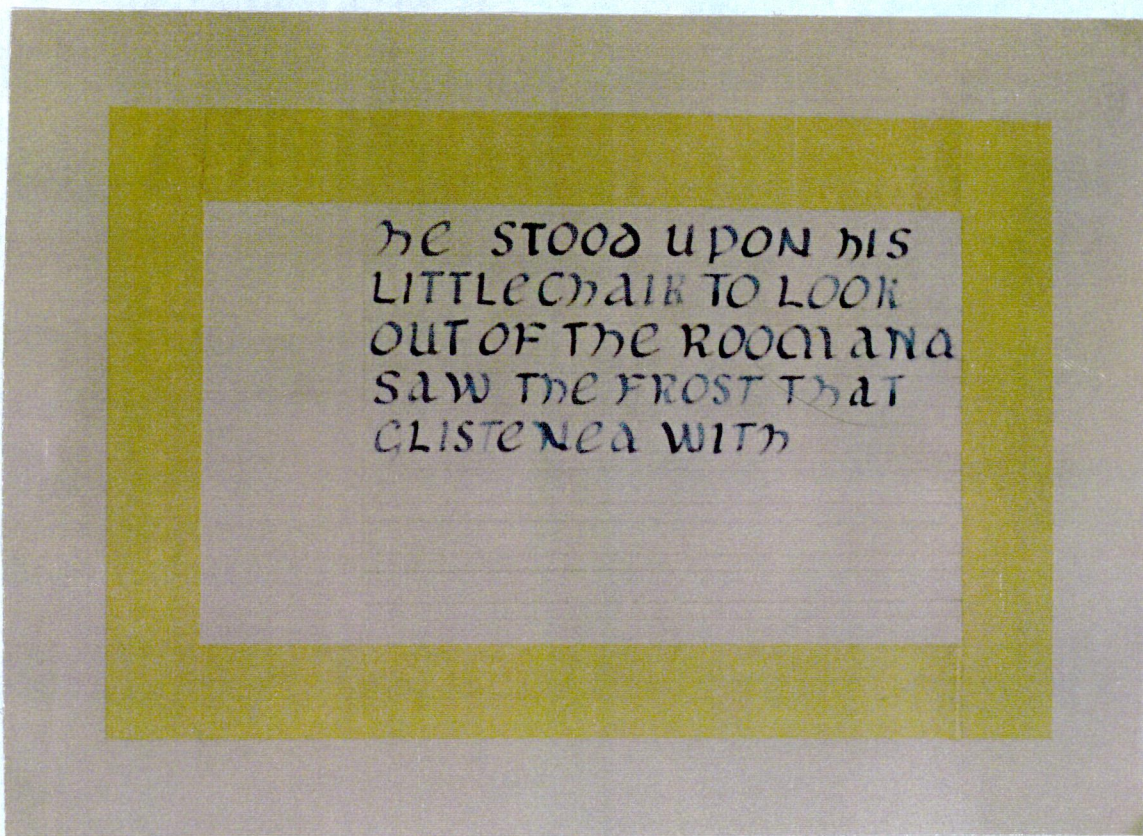


Fig. 5.14 Pupils work in its early stages.



Lesson eight, the final lesson of this scheme. The majority of the class have asked for an extra day next week to finish their scrolls. A few people finished today with their text and illuminated letters which they decorated with images and painted areas in gold paint. I gave the class a demonstration today on how they might present their scrolls and asked them to think about the way they should be hung up and if they made a fold-out book they should think about how to present it. Figure 5.15 shows an example of a pupils finished scroll which she decided to present rolled up and tied with a piece of ribbon. Some pupils want to attach a piece of bamboo to the top and bottom of the scroll and then hang it up. I have left it up to the pupils themselves as to how they present the work but I urged them to think about how the monks might have stored their work and the materials they would have to use. This is why some pupils used twigs and other natural objects.



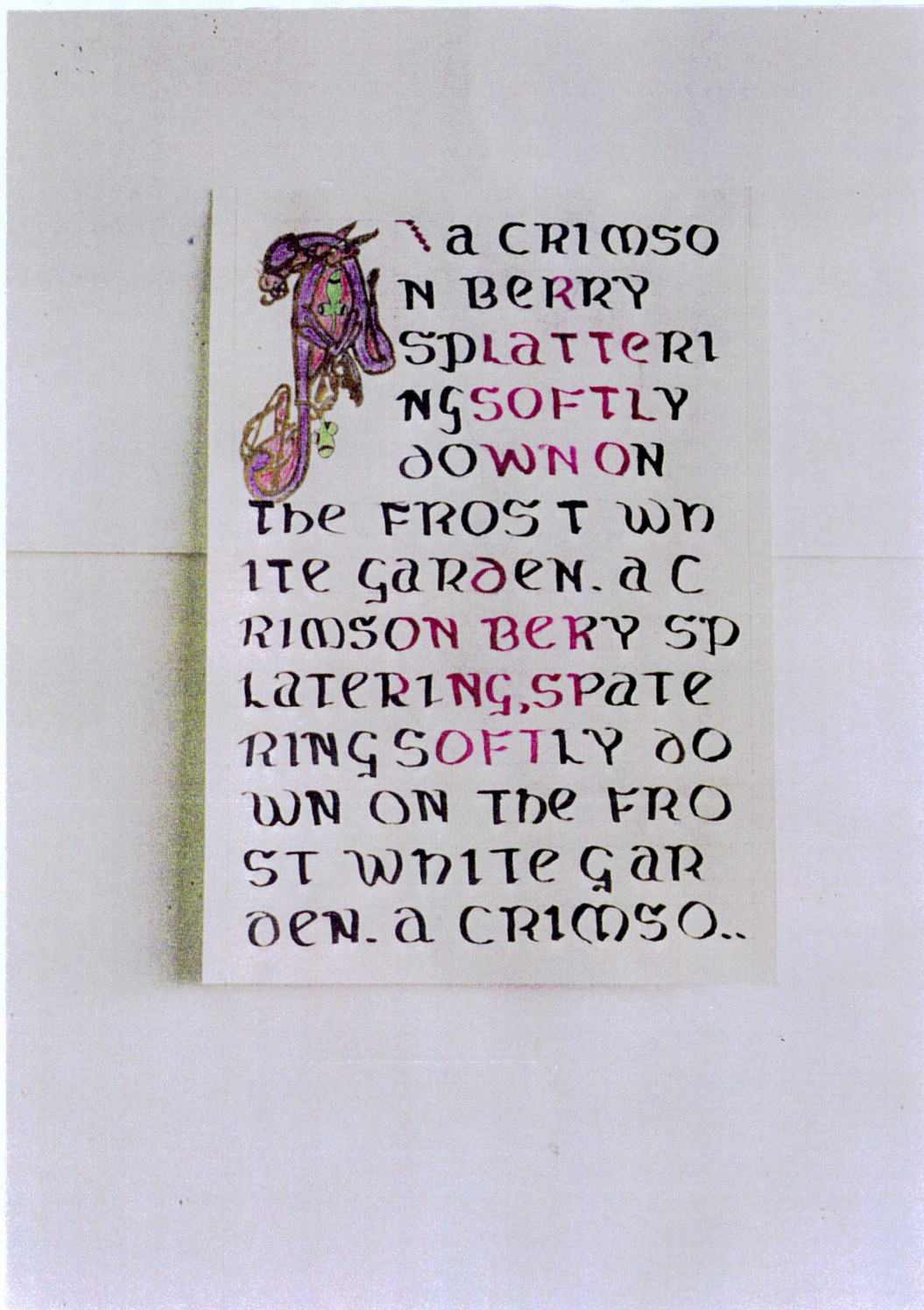
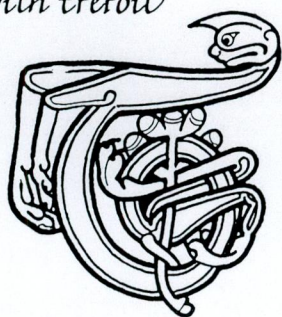


Fig. 5.15 A pupils work in the final stages.

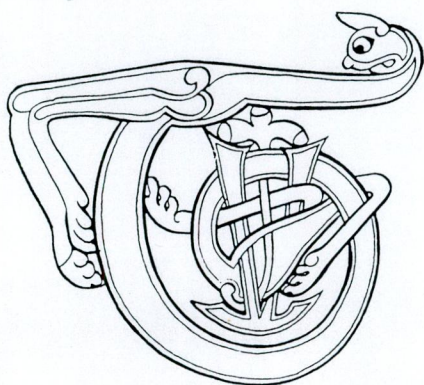


*Lion with trefoil  
tail,*



a

*Lion with trefoil tail adapted to a  
monogram.*

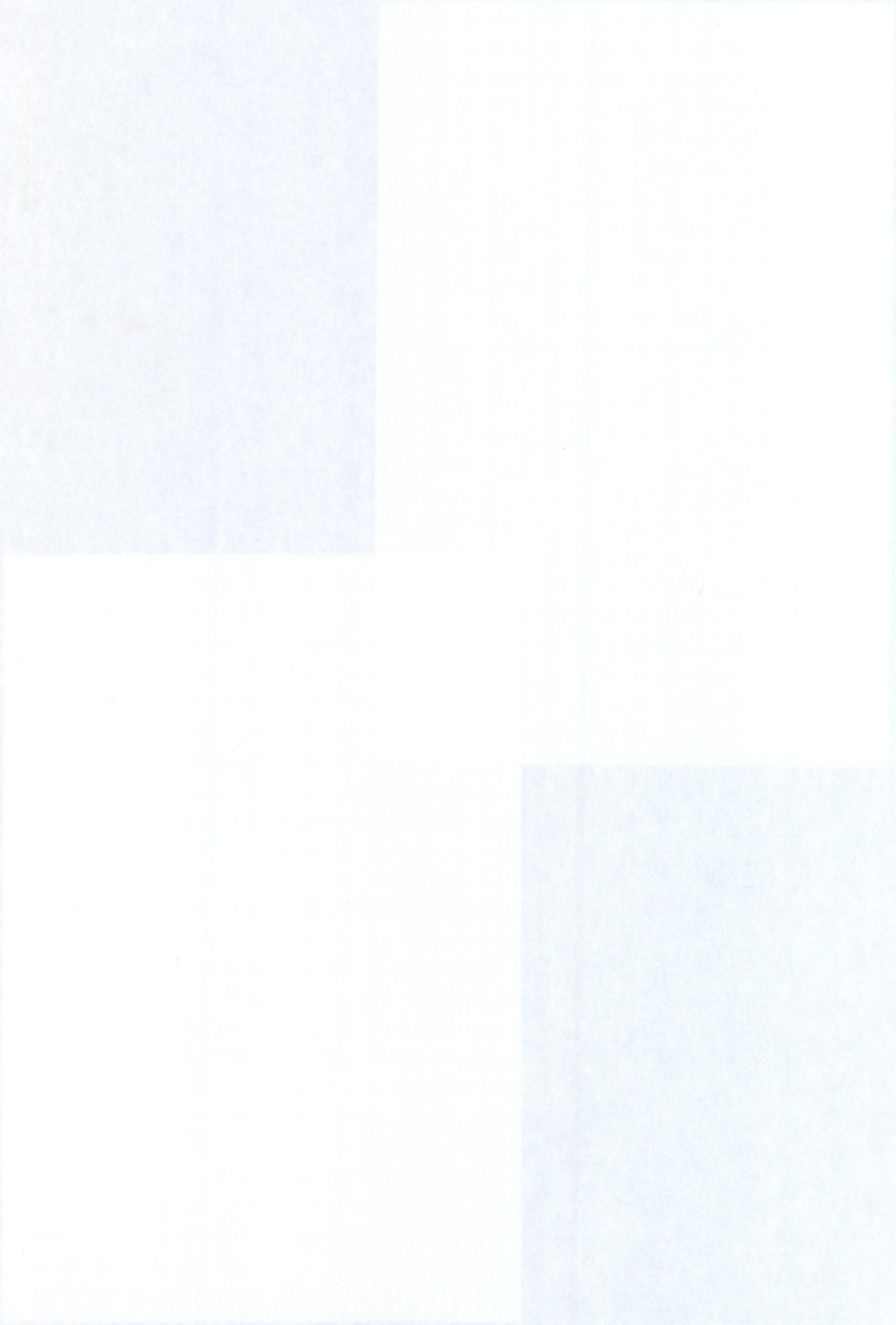


b



*Two lions and an eagle.*

Fig. 5.16 Illuminated Letters - support studies used throughout the scheme



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND OBSERVATIONS

During the course of the scheme and through the reading which I have done I have come to discover how very important art history is to the all round development of the pupil if we wish to provide the future generations with a knowledge and appreciation of art and artists of the past and the present. The use of art history as a support study is recognised throughout the education system for it's importance as an aid to a pupils fuller and more exciting art education.

I would like to see art history being used throughout primary and secondary school art classes, however I do recognise that this process of integration will be a slow process, but worth the time and energy. Art history has so much to offer to the pupils development as a creative person that we cannot afford to ignore it as a vital part of the art, craft and design course. As Alan Gartenhaus says in his writings on creative thinking, creativity leads to personal discovery and a higher level of understanding. If one, as an art teacher can contribute to this development then it should be nurtured and explored. I believe that if one was to place more emphasis on the history of art and appreciation as part of the practical course, the pupil would become

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND OBSERVATIONS

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comfortable with the information as well as the aesthetic qualities of art history. The Junior Certificate course has made the first and most vital steps forward in its objectives, integrating the use of historical resources as part of the thought process for project work. A pupil coming from the Junior Certificate is on his/her way to understanding the art history course but at Leaving Certificate level this understanding may become clouded by the fact that art history is a third of the final mark in the Leaving Certificate exam and appreciating art history is probably the last thing the pupil has time for because the course is so vast. One can understand the pupils concerns about the exam but if the pupil can be encouraged to take his/her influences and resources from art history for everything they do then they will be learning and developing an appreciation as they go through the course.

Through working with the fifth year class, I saw how they love information about artists they have never heard of or to be shown artefacts that are unusual or controversial. For example, after a few weeks of looking at the Book of Kells and studying its decorative and technical qualities, I showed the class works by other calligraphers such as Herman Zapf and Irene Wellington.

These are artists who have taken an ancient technique and created work

comfortable with the information as well as the academic qualities of an history. The James C. Cannon Center has made the first and most vital steps forward in its objective, integrating the use of historical resources as part of the insight process for project work. A paper coming from the James

Cannon Center is on the way to understanding the an history course but as I writing I criticize how this understanding may become clouded by the fact that my history is a kind of the final work in the James C. Cannon Center and appears to be history is probably the last thing the paper has time for

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Through working with the 100 year class I saw how they have information about history they have never heard of or to be about subjects that are relevant to contemporary. For example after a few weeks of looking at the state of North and studying the historical and technical disciplines I showed

the class works by other colleagues such as Thomas Kuhn and from

I have seen what have taken an ancient technique and created work

which was very unusual and far removed from the work of the monks who created the Book of Kells. I brought this idea into my scheme by allowing the pupils to choose their own text through which they developed a contemporary feel to the work but still keeping to the traditional techniques and formats. In conclusion, the integration of art history as a support study is vital in the art course and one should not ignore its tremendous potential as a resource for pupils at all levels. I would hope that the pupil would learn a vast amount from the past and that the knowledge h/she gathers would stay with him/her always especially if that pupil wishes to go on to study art at third level where a knowledge and appreciation of art history is so much a part of the course.

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